

Black Votes Matter
UNO Adjunct Professor, Preston Love Jr.
Prestonlovejr.com

Black Lives, Black Poverty and Black Votes Matter

Urban Economic Development

Previously, I have written that there are three emerging issues that will impact north Omaha and require collaboration and engagement with the community, Economic development is priority number one. Included in this article is what I see as the need for our political parties to act on.

Nebraska Democrats have recognized the plight and civil rights of all people. Nebraska Democrats have recognized the plight and civil rights of urban Nebraska. Urban Nebraskans have been loyal and committed Democratic voters for over 50 years. In Urban Nebraska the percentage of democratic voters continues to far outweigh that of other party voters. The fact remains that despite this continued support, turnout in urban Nebraska has continued to spiral downwards. Exceptions are surely noted in 1984, 1990 and 2008, but trend continues and has reached a critical juncture. There is a correlation of this voting slippage with the continued rise in poverty, joblessness and hopelessness in our urban communities. We must demonstrate our commitment and our energies for urban development, if we do and we will stop the “bleeding”. If we don’t the slippage will continue, and the urban vote will shrink and/or move to other political options.

Nebraska Democrats recognize that to energize our loyal urban voters we must advocate and develop policy and for real urban development. Real urban development must include initiatives to create jobs and small business development. Real urban development must include community benefits and agreements as to any economic development within the urban settings. Real urban development must maintain the integrity of the urban culture and history.

Note to the statement: Most of the community economic development to date have brought jobs, some have not brought a lot of jobs but, all jobs contribute greatly to the community. To make a greater impact the developments must provide other elements; contracts to community businesses, contractors and for-profit service companies, indirect investment into the community, contributions to stated community needs. This is responsive and responsible development. Many cities are addressing this with what is called Community Benefit Agreements. CBA’s. A CBA specify and codify a set of specific agreements as to how the developer will commit to providing the range of benefits to the community it is about to develop. When Walmart came to North Omaha we got jobs (great), but we didn’t get contracts and other commitments. Going forward we must demand CBAs. Community leadership must begin to demand some form of CBAs. Leadership and community must collaborate with the public and private sectors to not just focus on development but responsible development.

To review previous Black Votes Matter column articles, visit Omahastar.com. Or prestonlovejr.com. Preston love can be reached at prestonlovejr@gmail.com